

Prepared Remarks of Governor Jon S. Corzine
Liberty Middle School, West Orange
Tuesday, February 13, 2007

Thank you, Mayor/Assemblyman John McKeon, for that kind introduction. Thank you Commissioner Jackson, President Fox, Ralph LaRossa, and Senator Codey for coming -- and for all your leadership in making New Jersey a model for energy conservation and greenhouse gas reductions.

But thank you, most of all, to the students and teachers for welcoming us today -- and, more importantly, for setting such an important example by going on an "energy diet."

Small steps add up to big steps, and the lesson you're teaching us is that there is something that every single person in this room can do to make a difference.

I understand that your Science Club started a recycling program, organized to get recycling bins in all the classroom, and even persuaded the city to place a recyclables dumpster outside.

And this comes in the context of all the other steps you're taking -- small steps that add up to a big impact like replacing regular light bulbs with fluorescent ones, encouraging your parents to drive less, and turning off electronic devices when you're not using them.

I believe that if we think, work, and act together, we can bring our state and country to a tipping-point with regards to the way we think about and use energy.

And today I want to talk a little bit about what we're doing as a state to push the frontier of good public policy; to minimize our "carbon footprint"; to protect our air, climate, health, economy, and national security; and to make sure that your generation doesn't have to deal with the calamities that could result from climate change.

I know that you've studied the causes and effects of global warming, so these scary facts will sound familiar:

- 11 of the last 12 years rank among the 12 warmest years on record.
- Sea levels are rising, weather patterns are changing, and glaciers and ice-caps are melting.
- In fact, if the climate warms for the next 50 years at the same rate it has for the last 10, rising sea levels will claim at least 50 feet of Manhattan.
- And the effects could be even more devastating along our 127 miles of coastline.

Yes, it's true that New Jersey is merely part of a much larger global problem.

And, yes, we need to overcome the steepest barrier we face -- the false idea that we can't reduce greenhouse gas emissions without hurting the economy.

But your future is on the line so if you keep pushing the same way you did for that recycling dumpster outside, I'm optimistic that we can make real changes -- and I've committed the state of New Jersey to pushing too.

In fact, just today I signed an Executive Order that sets the goals of (1) stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels by 2020 and (2) reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent of today's levels by 2050.

This Executive Order also directs the Department of Environmental Protection to create an inventory of our greenhouse gas emissions, and to track our progress toward curtailing them.

All the stakeholders and relevant elements of government will work together to make these goals a reality.

And I pledge that my administration will work closely with the legislature -- and especially with Sen. Buono, Assm. McKeon, and Assw. Stender who have already shown tremendous leadership on this issue -- to pass legislation this session that will support and strengthen these targets.

For the reporters in the room, let me also say that I support strong federal legislation along the lines of the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2007 and urge the Congress to pass and President to sign legislation that will support and advance the commitments made by the states.

Finally, I want you all to know that I'll be calling on other states to join our efforts, the same way we should all call on other schools to replicate yours.

We've already created the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative -- or RGGI -- and have pledged to reduce New Jersey's power plant emissions.

But we also need to do more to reduce the amount of dirty, coal-fired power that we import from other states -- and to do so while being mindful of the electricity bills that your parents and teachers pay.

To this end, my administration will be working with Sen. Smith and Assem. McKeon on legislation that will allow the state to auction up to 100 percent of allowances under the carbon dioxide emissions trading program set up by RGGI.

And we'll use the funds we get from the auction to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and demand reduction, which will lower energy costs for everyone -- residential, commercial, and industrial consumers alike.

Let me close the same way I started, by saying that the point of all this is that we all have a role to play in reducing the amount of energy we use and greenhouse gases we release.

It's easy to sit around and say that somebody else should do something, but today we're taking action.

We're taking real steps toward a world that uses less energy, that uses clean energy, and that doesn't have to suffer the worst consequences of climate change.

The example you're setting here at Liberty and in your homes is a real inspiration.

And I encourage everyone across the state to follow your lead -- to look for projects in your home, hometown, school, business, or community that will make the kind of difference you're making here.

Congratulations. Keep up your hard work.

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